

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT

USAF review
completed. Pgs 3-6
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FROM:

ARMY Review
Completed Pgs 3-6
ONLY.HENRY A. KISSINGER *HK*

SUBJECT:

Daily Report on Southeast Asia Situation

Secretary Laird's daily report on the Southeast Asia situation for March 2 is at Tab A. He reports that there was an overall lull in combat during March 2 and on the morning of March 3 the ARVN 3d division launched a seven-battalion operation in northernmost Quang Tri Province. No contact has been reported.

Secretary Laird's paper also contains a discussion of the infiltration and logistics situation. He notes that there is an apparent anomaly between the high level of enemy infiltration and proportionately lower level of logistics flow. Among the explanations he offers for this discrepancy are:

-- There are inherent limitations on our intelligence gathering in regard to enemy logistics flow and unknown stockpiles in South Laos and the Republic of Vietnam.

-- Supply input figures for 1972 have lagged more than one-third behind the same period in 1971, but throughput is judged to be thirty percent higher.

-- An unconfirmed possibility exists that ARVN forces left behind supplies in last year's Lam Son 719 operation which might be available now for use by the enemy in the highlands.

-- The possibility of a feint for propaganda and political purposes without actually mounting a sustained attack or simply conducting a short period of maximum combat which would not require a large logistics build-up.

Secretary Laird concludes that available logistic and infiltration data do not provide clear evidence of the NVA's offensive capability or intentions

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for this dry season and the ambiguities surrounding present enemy deployments will require clarification from prisoners, captured documents and demonstrated enemy actions before a firm assessment is possible.

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

3 MAR 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: Daily Report on Southeast Asia Situation

The following information is provided on recent US air activity in SEAsia:

a. US Air Sorties flown on 2 March 1972:

<u>TacAir</u>	<u>B-52</u>	<u>Gunships</u>	<u>Non-Attack</u>	<u>Total</u>
317	51	23	67	458

b. Distribution of sorties was as follows:

Cambodia

B-52	3
Gunship	0
TacAir-Attack	30
Non-Attack	0

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B-52	36
Gunship	1
TacAir-Attack	19
Non-Attack	0

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TacAir-Attack	6
Non-Attack	26

North Laos

B-52	6
Gunship	4
TacAir-Attack	32
Non-Attack	6

South Laos

B-52	6
Gunship	18
TacAir-Attack	230
Non-Attack	35

TOTAL

B-52	51
Gunship	23
TacAir-Attack	317
Non-Attack	67

GROUP-1

See Def Cont Nr. X-1038

Excluded from automatic

downgrading No Objection to Declassification in Full 2011/11/22 : LOC-HAK-451-1-2-7

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c. CVAs (and aircraft assigned) on YANKEE STATION.

USS CORAL SEA (CVA-43)

23 F4B
 22 A7E
 9 A6A
 4 KA6D
 3 EKA3B
 3 E1B
 4 SH3G

USS HANCOCK (CVA-19)

24 F8J
 34 A4F
 3 RF8G
 3 EKA3B
 2 E1B
 3 UH2C

d. ARC LIGHT sorties, by Launch Base.

Anderson (Guam)	12
U Tapao (Thailand)	<u>39</u>
Total	51

The following is a continuation of yesterday's discussion concerning enemy logistic and personnel infiltration.

Intelligence agencies have noticed an apparent anomaly between the rates of enemy manpower and supply infiltration (the southward flows through the Laos Panhandle). The divergence which raised the question was an apparently high rate of personnel infiltration, while logistic flow appeared to be proportionately behind the previous levels. These apparently contradictory indicators have caused some doubt concerning the enemy's capability and intentions to launch a major offensive in the RVN.

Two reasonable approaches to explain the apparent anomaly are possible:

- The data describing supply infiltration is "soft", so that no real discrepancy between the personnel buildup and the accompanying logistic flow exists. The "softness" in the supply data is due to an expanded enemy road net, rainy weather which slowed the NVA dry season supply surge, and inherent limitations in the intelligence-gathering system. Furthermore, the NVA has an unknown stockpile in Southern Laos and the RVN that may be able to support an offensive surge without a corresponding supply increase through the Trail.
- The apparent anomaly in logistic and personnel data may have been rectified in recent weeks because supply indicators have increased to appear to be commensurate with the personnel flow indicators. Although supply input figures for 1972 have lagged more than one-third behind the same period of 1971, supply throughput is 30 percent greater this year, perhaps because of forward movement of stock-piled materiel.

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Neither of the above explanations helps to explain satisfactorily the current enemy picture in and near South Vietnam. LAMSON 719 distorted enemy infiltration patterns last year, and the NVA build-up to counter the ARVN thrust may have left behind large stockpiles in South Laos which are available to support the enemy troop concentration near Kontum. This possibility has not been confirmed. The pattern of past years also is distorted by increased NVA emphasis on growing food at the way-stations along the infiltration routes in Laos. In addition, food supplies are available from Cambodia. These additional sources of foodstuffs may make it possible for a larger proportion of throughput from North Vietnam to consist of arms and ammunition.

Enemy tactics also may offer a partial explanation for his apparent offensive posture. The laborious "preparation of the battlefield" by stockpiling supplies outside of base areas along the path NVA forces will follow in an attack has not been noticed extensively this dry season. However, if the enemy plans to conduct a quick attack followed by a maximum supply surge from his rear areas, precedents in supply patterns would be broken.

A final uncertainty which should be considered when reviewing the present posture of enemy forces is the political motivation for their conduct. Feigning an attack by concentrating sizable forces without planning an actual attack would serve propaganda purposes. On the other hand, a short period of maximum combat probably would not require a large logistics build-up and such a thrust could have a variety of political objectives.

In summary, it is apparent that logistic and personnel infiltration data do not provide clear evidence of the NVA's offensive capability or of his intentions this dry season. The ambiguities surrounding the present enemy deployments will require clarification from prisoners, captured documents and demonstrated enemy actions before a firm assessment is possible.

The CJCS assessment of the current and prospective military situation is as follows:

a. The overall lull in combat activity within the Republic continued during the past 24 hours. Since 27 February, six attacks by fire have been directed at friendly elements just south of the eastern sector of the DMZ. This morning, the 3d Division launched a seven-battalion operation in Quang Tri. The purpose of the operation is to clear the area south-southwest of Quang Tri City where the old enemy Base Area 101 was once located. No contact has been reported.

b. In NVN, aerial photography has revealed two 122mm field guns in travel mode approximately one NM south-southwest of Dong Hoi. It also confirmed the continued presence of armor in southern Quang Binh Province where six T-34 and five PT-76 tanks were noted in an armor training area north of the western DMZ.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. J. Sine", is written over the lower right portion of the page.

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